RNA FOR A BETTER LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS

RIVERVIEW Neighborhood Association

December, 2001 – January, 2002 232 Ogden Avenue, Jersey City, N. J. 07307 – (201) 798-0493

RNA IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH ANY POLITICAL PARTY, ORGANIZATION OR ELECTED OFFICIAL

RNA HOLIDAY PARTY

On **Tuesday, December 11**, RNA will hold its Annual Holiday Celebration for all its members, neighbors and friends. We are cordially inviting our colleagues from other neighborhood, block and civic associations throughout the City and Hoboken to celebrate the holiday season with RNA. We have also sent out invitations to our new Mayor and his staff, our Ward councilpersons and At-large representatives and all the City officials from the various agencies that have worked with and helped our community during the year.

As usual, RNA will provide a variety of delicious hot food catered by a local business. In turn, we ask everyone to bring a favorite homemade holiday desert treat or a non-alcoholic beverage.

The party will take place at the **Harbor View Health Care Facility** on the corner of Ogden Avenue and Franklin Street. Doors open at **7:00 PM**. As usual, no official business will be conducted at this meeting unless there are emergency announcements. For more information, please call **Maria Tuzzo** at **659-2245.**

Members are encouraged to bring a new friend or neighbor. Start celebrating the holidays with RNA.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

This is a double edition of the RNA newsletter for the months of December, 2001 and January, 2002.

RNA's first monthly meeting of the new year will be held on **Tuesday, January 8th**. Our guest speaker will be **Mayor Glenn Cunningham** who will be asked to discuss issues of local and city wide concern.

During the holidays, RNA can be contacted at (201) 79800493, regarding any issues of concern that the community should be notified about. Also look for updates on the ***savethepalisades.org*** website or the community bulletin board located at the corner of Palisade Avenue and Bowers Street.

HOLIDAYEVENTS

On **Sunday, December 16th**, RNA will organize its annual holiday **CAROLING** throughout the neighbor hood. The festivities will begin at **5:00 PM** at the **Park Pavilion in Riverview-Fisk Park** located on Ogden Avenue between Griffith and Bowers Streets.

Dress warmly with proper clothing and footwear. Printed song sheets will be given out, but bring your own flashlight. If you are unable to walk with us, please welcome the carolers to your house by putting on your porch lights. And show your appreciation by inviting them in for some good cheer and some hot refreshments.

Bring your family and friends. All are welcome to participate in this holiday event!

On **Sunday, December 9th**, *our neighbor* **Valerie Woodson** *will once again host a rehearsal night to practice our "extensive repertoire" of songs. It will begin at* **7:00 PM** *at* **174 Ogden Avenue.**

For more information about these two events, call **Maria Tuzzo** at **659-2245.**

HOLIDAY FOOD & TOY DRIVE

You can still contribute to our Annual Food and Toy Drive. Dry and canned food products will be accepted. New or used toys (in good working condition only) are also welcome. Please bring your gifts of food and toys to the **December 11th** meeting. You can also make a monetary donation.

The deadline for donations - either gifts or money - is **Friday, December 14th.** You can drop off your contributions during the week or receive more information by calling **Maria Tuzzo at 659-2245.**

This year the toys collected will be distributed by the **Jersey City Police Department.** Food donations will be given to **"In Jesus' Name,"** a local soup kitchen, in constant need of food and supplies.

COMMUNITYUPDATES

JEHOVAH'S WITNESS PROJECT UPDATE: On November 27th, the New Jersey Congregation of Jehovah's Witness (CJW) met with community representatives and the City's planning department to discuss the two variances – parking and building setbacks -that the CJW is seeking for their proposed house of worship, to be located at the southeast corner of New York Avenue and South Street. The CJW is proposing parking for 15 cars using "stacked" parking.

During the discussions new information was revealed that greatly increases this project's impact on the neighborhood from what we had first been told:

1) Instead of housing two congregations, the two auditoriums (each auditorium has a capacity of approximately 200) will be used by four congregations (80-120 members per congregation).
2) Originally, worship services were to be one congregation each weekday night. The new meeting schedule is: Monday evening - no services, Tuesday thru Friday (7:00 pm – 9:00 pm) one congregation meets, Saturday - approximately 20 people will meet for organizational and cleaning purposes, Sunday - both auditoriums will be used for services (10:00am -12:00pm and then again from 1:00pm - 3:00pm). Given the heavy use that is projected, the community feels that the proposed 15 "stacked" parking spaces is completely inadequate and the zoning requirements of 39 parking spaces should be adhered to.
3) Previously described as a neighborhood house of worship where most members are local residents and would be walking to services, the boundaries were elaborated upon as being the Union City and Hoboken city limits, State Highway and Liberty Ave./Tonnelle Avenue. The CJW representative stated that in an informal poll of each congregation, the results were that an "average of 20 cars" would be used by each congregation to attend meetings. On Sunday, with both auditoriums in use simultaneously, there would be at least 40 parking spaces needed from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Given the large area that is encompassed, and with the rain and cold of the inclement winter months, the number of cars used will increase even more.
4) Any "special uses" such as weddings, funerals, etc. were described as occurring only once or twice a year.

The meeting ended with no concessions on the building's setbacks from the CJW representative, and that parking alternatives would be "looked into". At this time it is expected that the project will go before the planning board, "as is", on **Tuesday, December 18th**. The community is organizing to oppose the current application. If you intend to drive to the planning board meeting we need people to help with car pooling. For more information, contact **Margi Daly at 963-6564**.

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT'S LIGHT RAIL ELEVATOR: New Jersey Transit (NJT) is going to build a station for the **Hudson-Bergen Light Rail** (HBLR) system at Ninth Street in Hoboken at the base of the Palisade cliffs. In order to increase ridership and make the system accessible to the residents of the Heights, NJT has proposed to build an elevator from the base of the cliff to the intersection of Congress Street and Paterson Plank Road.

At a recent Council meeting, NJT was given permission to perform environmental studies at the base of the cliff. However, several council members questioned whether this construction would conflict with the City's new steep slope ordinance. **Bill Gaughan**, our Ward D councilman advised **NJT spokesperson Bill Reilly** to meet with the community to discuss this project.

RNA has requested Gaughan to set up a meeting with NJT and the various community groups to review the design plans for this project.

COUNTY MASTER PLAN: The **Hudson County Planning Board** introduced its proposed Master Plan at the Board's October 17, 2001 meeting. The Board is required to present this Plan for public review and consideration. By law, Board must disseminate the proposal to each municipal clerk, planning board and governing body. In addition, the Board has posted the

Plan on the internet (*www.HudsonCountyNJ.org/Masterplan.htm*) and has established a ninety day public comment period. A public hearing is scheduled for **January 16, 2002.**

Comments should be either submitted to **Stephen D. Marks, Office of Strategic Revitalization**, 583 Newark Avenue, Jersey City, 07306 or e-mailed to **masterplancomments@hudsoncountynj.org**.

MEETING MINUTES: November 13, 2001

POLICE: NTF officers **Lorenzo Tosado** and **Ed Rutkowski** gave the members an update on previously reported incidents. The police have been keeping an eye on the male barbershop on Franklin Street, west of Palisade Avenue because of numerous complaints from the community. They have also been moving the late night basketball players that are using the courts in Riverview-Fisk Park.

The officers also took information on new complaints. Excessive drinking has gotten out of hand along the lower walkway in the Park (as evidenced by the large numbers of beer bottles and cans dumped on the cliff). It was also reported that apparently homeless people have been sleeping in the Park since the summer. Certain dog owners are letting their pets run through the Park without leashes. Some owners are even bringing the dogs in their cars and then just opening the door and letting the dogs run around without any proper supervision.

There was also a request for more frequent patrols along Mountain Road because of illegal activities such as dumping. The auto body shop on Griffith Street has resumed parking unlicensed vehicles on the street and residents are complaining about noxious paint fumes during off hours.

RNA voted to give this year's toys collected in its holiday drive to the Police Department to distribute throughout the community.

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS: The membership discussed various construction projects that were either being proposed or already occurring in our neighborhood.

The Jehovah Witnesses (JW) have submitted plans to build a congregation hall at New York Avenue and South Street. The building will have two auditoriums with a combined capacity of over 400 people. One problem is that they are asking for a variance to provide only 15 off-street parking spaces. Another issue is that the JW are planning to hold several meeting a week in contrast to the traditional weekly Sunday masses of our local churches. Overall, the neighbors are opposed to the potential volume of people that will be using their quiet residential neighborhood for their meetings. [*See* **Communityupdates** *for further information.*]

Another project that is being considered by the City is the conversion of the old fire house at 520 Palisade Avenue to residential condominiums and retail stores on the first floor.

Developer Norman Wilson has begun erecting a "tennis court" on the roof of this Mountain Road building. Neighbors are concerned that the Building Department is not properly supervising this project, particularly because there is no evidence of any permits or current building plans for this project.

HOLIDAY EVENTS: The members decided on the details for the upcoming holiday events of caroling, the lighting of the Park pavilion, the food and toy drive and the Holiday party.

The meeting closed at 9:25 PM.

Maria Tuzzo, Secretary

HARBOR VIEW HOLIDAY PARTY

RNA's annual celebration for the senior residents of the Harbor View Health Care Facility was a big success. They all seemed to have a good time. Desserts and soft drinks were served by young adults from St. Paul's CCD. The residents were then entertained with a selection of holiday, patriotic and old fashioned songs.

Finally, gifts were distributed to everyone by Santa (once again played by our own **Robert Boesch**) and his energetic elf (Valerie Rea). Gifts were also given to the volunteers from St Paul's and the Harbor View's kitchen staff.

Many thanks to the staff of the Harbor View for their help and cooperation, especially **Amy Wilson, Karinna, Amber and the entire kitchen staff**. Thanks go out to **Gail Sasso** who always comes through with her delicious cupcakes. Special thanks this year to **Danny from Palisade Lumber**, **Joan Earls** and all our other neighbors and friends who donated something. Thanks to **Gerry Oasis** and her mother who played the electronic keyboard.

The singing was led by two fine vocalists: **Susan Ganley** and **Maria Tuzzo**. Thanks for the help of the Paulette sisters and the students from the CCD who also helped by visiting the residents unable to leave their floor. A special acknowledgement to **Katherine Keens** and her escort **Arthur** for their exhibition of solo dancing. Finally, a thanks to all our neighbors and friends who helped by volunteering their time and energy for this event.

Jack Rea

CHRISTMAS IS COMING, SANTA IS COMING

MEMORIES OF A CHRISTMAS PAST

In our house, preparations for Xmas was a big thing. I know its sounds silly but we would start very early, cleaning one room at a time (this takes time). Curtains and drapes come down. Some rooms had to be painted or washed down. The white glove treatment was given to every single room.

Mom was not part of the cleaning crew because her job was in the kitchen. She was in charge of the holiday food and treats. Mom started preparing and making her own sweet liqueurs to be used for the holidays. She was also busy shopping for the items to be used in her holiday baking. Some cakes like fruitcake had to be done before time. Cookies and other sweet breads were prepared later on.

There were special curtains and bedspreads. As we got closer to Xmas, we shopped around for a tree. This was always a real tree because there were no artificial trees at that time. Right before Xmas, the tree was set up in one corner of the living room and the trimmings and stockings were hung. The nativity scene with the hills and lakes and all the figurines was set up under the tree. Finally, December 24th, the night before Xmas arrived. We went to midnight mass and then came home and had a quick snack. Off to bed until morning when we would see the surprises that Santa left us. We were very happy with the gifts we got. We shouted Santa was here and Merry Xmas to all!

Jack Rea

RECYCLE THIS NEWSLETTER - PASS IT ON TO A FRIEND!

Letter to The Editor

[*The following letter was written by* **Monica J. Coe, Vice-President,** *of the* **Waterfront Association,** *regarding the proposed changes to the Newport redevelopment plan. On November 28th, due to the efforts of the Waterfront Association, the City Council postponed the vote on this plan in order to allow the residents to meet with City officials and the Lefrak Organization.]*

The Waterfront Association of Jersey City would like to let local citizens know about our battle to have Pier 199B, which consists of six acres of land in the Newport area, set aside as a waterside park to serve not just the local neighborhood, but the entire community of Jersey City.

The Lefrak Organization has developed over 90% of the 600 acres it owns in the Newport area. To date, this development consists of 7 office towers, 10 residential towers, 2 hotels, the Newport Centre Mall, 8 parking garages and other assorted commercial buildings. Other than the Sixth Street Pier, there are only 31 acres left to develop, located in the "Northeast Quadrant" to the east of the Holland Tunnel entrance. Lefrak is planning to add another 13 office and residential buildings there, in addition to a number of parking garages. An amended redevelopment plan regarding construction in this area comes before the City Council for a final vote this Wednesday evening, November 28.

This densely populated neighborhood needs a decent park. There are 10,000 residents here already, in addition to a large number of office workers, and more will follow with the completion of the anticipated buildings. Many people have the impression that there is a great deal of active park area in Newport because the neighborhood is nicely landscaped and has a fair number of trees. What they don't realize is that every single patch of grass in the entire 600-acre development has a sign saying "*Keep Off The Grass.*"

Local residents are fighting for an active park with a substantial area of lawn where the citizens of Jersey City could sunbathe, play with their children, enjoy a picnic with their friends, or simply relax on the grass while they watch the boats go by. We want a park where we could play casual games of football, soccer or frisbee. To date, our community group has collected over 600 signatures on a petition requesting

further amendments to the Newport Redevelopment Plan that give Jersey City residents a voice in the planning process for this area.

Our organization encourages the residents of Jersey City to visit Pier A Park in Hoboken (located on the waterfront just northeast of the Hoboken train station) to see a fine example of what we could have in our community.

The waterfront is an invaluable Jersey City asset to be enjoyed by everyone. Developers should not be allowed to detract from its beauty through bad planning. The Lefrak Organization recently built a seven-story parking garage on a land parcel directly adjacent to the Waterfront Walkway, fronting on River Drive South. The East wall of the garage crowds the walkway, causing it to be unappealing and deserted.

In addition, when Newport Office Center One (Newport Financial Center) was built in the mid-1980's, the Lefrak organization was able to strike a deal to reroute the Waterfront Walkway around onto the street side of the building rather than along the waterside. The resulting pathway detracts from the experience of those walking along our waterfront. Acceptance of this decision to reroute the walkway invalidates the spirit of the DEP plan requiring a continuous public waterfront walkway along the Hudson River extending from the Bayonne Bridge, northward to the George Washington Bridge. We need to strive to ensure that the balance of the waterfront in this area is treated with sensitivity.

We want wide, pleasant walkways, suitable for walking and biking, and we want a walkway that is not crowded by buildings looming above. As it is currently written, there is nothing in the Newport Redevelopment Plan that does not preclude building on Pier 199B. All of the master plan drawings submitted by the Lefrak Organization in the past few years present a walkway that is crowded by tall buildings and which is interrupted both physically and visually by buildings located on the pier.

Our organization respects the Lefrak Organization's right to build, as long as it is done in a manner considerate of quality-of-life issues. Our desire is to ensure that the waterfront is preserved in manner that will make it more accessible to the entire Jersey City community. We believe that a successful park on Pier 199B will ultimately make any local real estate more valuable and desirable.

The bottom line is that we seek to keep the Waterfront Walkway and its adjacent piers unobstructed. We want to preserve the piers for public use.

We encourage Jersey City Residents to contact your City Council members and to come to the City Council meeting on November 28 to make your voice heard regarding this issue. When our City Council members ran for election, they maintained that they would put an end to the former administration's practice of approving the wishes of every developer. Make sure that they honor their promise.

[*For more information, call:* **(201) 217-5549** *or visit the website:* **www.Newportcity.com.**]

Millennium Towers

RNA is still collecting contributions to pay the legal bills incurred in our fight against the Millennium Towers project.

To make a donation, send a check or money order payable to "Riverview Neighborhood Association" with the notation "MTP", to RNA, 232 Ogden Ave., J.C., N.J. 07307. All donations are tax-deductible and corporate matching grants are accepted.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

- Councilman Bill Gaughan: Ward D: **547-5485**
- Councilman Steve Lipski: Ward C: **610-1009**
- Maureen Corcoran, Mayor's Action Bureau: **547-5554** (formerly Constituent's Services)
- NID: CEO Smith: **547-5683** or **547-4982, voice mail #8029**
- Parking Authority: **547-6969, ext. 127**
- PSEG Lighting: to report a non-functioning light in the Parks or streets: **1-800-832-2221**

CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR NEWLSETTER

Tell us what you think about what you just read in this newsletter. Are you satisfied with the quality of life in your community? Send articles, comments and recipes to 232 Ogden Avenue.

Next deadline is January 25th.

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FOR A BETTER LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS

CELEBRATE the HOLIDAYS at
RNA'S XMAS PARTY on TUESDAY,
DECEMBER 13th, at 7:00 PM

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COMING EVENTS

12/9: Rehearsal for Christmas Caroling: Sunday. December 9th, 7:00 PM.

12/11: ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY: Tuesday, December 11, 7:00 PM

- Harbor View Health Care Facility: corner of Ogden & Franklin
- All members, neighbors and friends are invited. Hot food and refreshments will be served. Bring a friend or new neighbor.

12/16: Christmas Caroling: Sunday, December, 16th: 5:00 PM

- Park Pavilion, Riverview-Fisk Park

[For more information about these holiday events, see the front page of this newsletter.]

12/18: Planning Board: Tuesday, December 18th: 6:00 PM

- **OPPOSE the Jehovah's Witness Proposal**
- City Hall, 280 Grove Street (*See page 2 for more information.*)

1/8/02: 1st Monthly Meeting of New Year: Tuesday, January 8th, 7:30 PM

- Harbor View Health Care Facility: corner of Ogden & Franklin
- **Guest Speaker: Mayor Glenn Cunningham**